



# On two species of bivalves from Malta

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**ABSTRACT** Two interesting species of bivalves were found in an infralittoral detritus from Malta: *Notolimea clandestina* Salas, T 994 is recorded for the first time from Maltese waters; the collection of a great number of *Goodallia macandrewi* (Smith, 1881) is recorded and the description of its probably favourite habitat given.

**RIASSUNTO** In un detrito raccolto con A.R.A. a -15m in St. Julian's Bay, Malta, nel giugno 1994, sono stati trovati due bivalvi interessanti: 7 esemplari di *Notolimea clandestina* Salas, 1994 (Bivalvia, Limidae), specie descritta per lo Stretto di Gibilterra, di cui 5 vivi. La specie è stata poi ridescritta da CECALUPO nel 1995, ma non c'è dubbio che le due entità siano in realtà la stessa specie, come è possibile vedere confrontando le due descrizioni e le ottime illustrazioni che corredano i due articoli. La scultura porosa della prodissoconca, la forma e l'ornamentazione delle valve caratterizzano la specie (SALAS, 1994) e accomunano le due entità in un unico taxon. Sono stati inoltre rinvenuti centinaia di esemplari di *Goodallia macandrewi* (SMITH, 1881) (Bivalvia, Astartidae), anch'essi in gran parte vivi, ad indicare che l'habitat in cui sono stati raccolti deve essere quello preferenziale per la specie: il detrito proviene da un fondale di sabbia tine, con rari ciuffi di *Posidonia*, che ricopre interamente il fondo della baia.

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## INTRODUCTION

In June 1994 a sample of detritus was collected from St. Julian's Bay, NE Malta, during a SCUBA dive in 15 metres depth. The bay lies about 5 Km north of the capital city Valletta. The area around the bay is heavily polluted and a favourite with tourists, so the sea around is neither quiet nor clean. The sample contained almost two hundred species of molluscs, but two of them seemed to me more interesting than others.

### *Notolimea clandestina* Salas, 1994

Seven specimens were found, 5 of them alive. This species has been originally described from the Strait of Gibraltar. It was subsequently redescribed by CECALUPO (1995) as *Limopsis sebastianoi* for Lampedusa, the major island in the Pelagean group. Comparing both descriptions and SEM photographs there is no doubt the two taxa are identical: the general outline, the sculpture of the valves and of the prodissoconch are exactly the same.

Two specimens of this species had been already found alive by C. Mifsud in fine sand at -30/40 m from Qammieh on the NW coast of Malta (pers. comm.). This shows that the species is not endemic to the type localities as both Salas and CECALUPO suggested, but is distributed in the Strait of Sicily. This is substantiated by the fact that it has been found at different localities in both Malta and Lampedusa. Furthermore, its presence in Gibraltar makes probable the discovery of other specimens in the western Mediterranean.

However the findings at two localities in Malta and in few places of the Strait of Gibraltar and adjacent areas (SALAS, 1994) suggest that *Notolimea clandestina* is a very localized species.

In Malta it is very rare and it has not been recorded again since its discovery in 1994. The rich findings in Lampedusa, where more than two hundred specimens were found (CECALUPO, 1995) are exceptional.

In July 1996, a second sample of detritus from the same locality and the same depth was collected while SCUBA diving. Again a rich malacofauna, but this time no *Notolimea* were present. The specimens from Malta and Lampedusa were all found in very fine sand and at first I thought the lack of this species in 1996 material was caused by having collected sand not fine enough. However Salas states that this species has been found in a rubble and stony bottom and only valves were found in intertidal shell sand. Thus the habitat of this species can be variable, and maybe it depends on the different geographical zones.

For good illustrations of this species and for further information on it and on similar species I refer to both Salas's and CECALUPO's articles, where very good SEM photographs render the identification of this species very easy.

### *Goodallia macandrewi* (Smith, 1881)

More than 800 specimens were found in 1994 and a few hundreds in 1996, most of them alive. It appears that in the bay its ideal habitat occurs. The bottom was covered by fine sand with few, small areas of *Posidonia oceanica* (L.) Delile.

Both samples were collected in 15 metres, indicating that this is a shallow water species.

For additional information on the species and for illustrations I refer to VAN AARTSEN (1985), where the author indicates this species has been dredged from offshore waters in many parts of the Mediterranean.

I think it is important to underline the fact that the spot of my records was not at all offshore, but some two hundred meters off the coast in the middle of the bay.

Amidst the great quantity of material found, many juveniles were present. These differ by having thinner valves and for their more inaequilateral shape.



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